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A PLEA FOR A RETURN
TO THE CONSTITUTION.

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The Government of the American Historical Association.

A PLEA FOR A RETURN TO THE CONSTITUTION.

To the Members of the American Historical Association:

In the April, 1914, number of the *American Historical Review*, there appeared as the opening paper of that number, under the initials of the Managing Editor, an account of the last meeting of the American Historical Association, held at Charleston and Columbia, South Carolina. In treating the question of the government of the Association, which was raised at the business meeting, the Managing Editor of the *Review*, in the final pages of his account, made a lengthy defense of the present management, complimented the Council of which he is an influential member, and contended vigorously that changes looking to a larger control by the members who attend the meetings and bear the financial burdens year after year, were unnecessary. The evident purpose of that contention was to convince the members of the Association, through its official organ, that the position taken at Charleston, and later in a series of letters in the *Nation*, by those who are contending that a democratic policy, as laid down in the organic law, is best for the future growth and usefulness of the Association, was without merit.

The *Review* is the official publication of the American Historical Association; it is the property and should be under the control of the Association. When the official organ is made the medium for the discussion of a subject of controversy in the Association by one charged with its management, or by any one else, it seems that an opportunity should be given for the presentation of the other side of the question. In other words, when Dr. J. Franklin Jameson, the Managing Editor of the *Review*, undertook to present his views on the government of the Association, did he not open the way for an answer to his argument? Is not his refusal to publish an answer a suppression of the right of full and free discussion? The writer thought so when he read his paper and he holds the same opinion now. With that thought in mind, he had the following correspondence with Dr. Jameson:

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY,

JACKSON, MISS., May 14, 1914.

My dear Dr. Jameson:

I read with much interest your account of the Charleston meeting of the American Historical Association in the April number of the *Review*. Your discussion of the management of the Association is timely, and I am glad that your comment gives an opportunity for the entire subject to be laid before each member. In order to bring this about, I offer for publication in the July or October number of the *Review*, a paper containing the letters upon the subject which appeared in the *Nation*, with an introductory note and such other comments as are deemed necessary.

I make this offer to you as Managing Editor of the *Review* in order to have both sides of the controversy submitted to the members of the Association through the official publication, and I make tender of the paper at the suggestion of many interested members from all parts of the country.

Yours very truly,

DUNBAR ROWLAND.

Dr. J. F. Jameson,

Mng. Ed. American Historical Review,

Woodward Building, Washington, D. C.

To that letter the following reply was made:

THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW,

WASHINGTON, D. C., May 18, 1914.

My dear Dr. Rowland:

This is in reply to your letter of May 14. If I am to tell you the honest truth, I do not see any reason why your letters to the *Nation*, or Fay's, or MacDonald's, or Latine's, or mine, should be reprinted in the *American Historical Review*, or anywhere else. Everybody seems to have seen most of them, and to have read all they wish to read of them. The *Nation* goes everywhere. So I think I can fill the pages of the *Review* in better ways.

With best wishes,

Very truly yours,

J. F. JAMESON.

Dr. Dunbar Rowland,

Department of Archives and History,

Jackson, Mississippi.

This answer was sent to that letter:

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY,

JACKSON, MISS., May 26, 1914.

My dear Dr. Jameson:

I have your letter of May 18, declining as Managing Editor to publish in the *American Historical Review* a paper containing a discussion of the government of the American Historical Association as it appeared in the *Nation* with the addition of other matter pertinent to the subject.

I had hoped that you would see the propriety and justice of having both sides of the discussion appear in the official publication of the Association in view of the fact that you had, as Managing Editor, given your views at length in favor of the position that no improvement in the government of the organization is necessary. There are many members of the Association who hold different views to yours, and it seems that they should have a chance to express themselves in a publication which they help to support and which belongs to the Association of which they are members.

My object, therefore, in requesting the publication of what may be termed the liberal contention in the official organ of the Association, was that its advocates may have the same opportunity and privilege to present their ideas to the entire membership of the Association as those who take a conservative position.

Since this very proper medium has been closed to us, I shall adopt other means of presenting the discussion.

May I ask if you have any objection to my using your letter of May 18 in connection with the future discussion of the subject? As our discussion deals with a matter of general interest to the Association, I conclude that any use of your part of it will be agreeable to you.

With every expression of high regard,

Yours very sincerely,

DUNBAR ROWLAND.

*Dr. J. F. Jameson,
Woodward Building,
Washington, D. C.*

Dr. Jameson replied as follows:

1140 WOODWARD BUILDING,

WASHINGTON, D. C., May 29, 1914.

My dear Dr. Rowland:

In your letter of May 26, you express yourself as having hoped that I would see the propriety and justice of acceding to your request. I do not doubt that I am capable of seeing propriety and justice whenever they exist. In my judgment, it does not at all follow that because two or three pages were devoted, in my article on the Charleston meeting, to the questions you then raised, it is, therefore, required by propriety and justice that I should agree to print a whole article on the subject (to the exclusion of some good historical article) whenever any member desires it. In treating of the Charleston meeting, it was requisite that something should be said on this topic; you found fault with Fay for saying too little about it. But as to an article on the subject, if one member of the Association has the right to have one printed, every member has—and while indeed there are not 2,800 opinions on the subject, there are certainly a good many more than two. I should not agree to print an article on the subject by *any* member, whether his views came near mine or were opposed to them; and

especially not an article which would mainly consist of matter reprinted from the *Nation*, perfectly accessible to all members, and long since read by most of those who care anything about the matter.

As to publication through any other medium you have my cordial consent to the printing of my letter of May 18, of this letter, and of the letter which I printed in the *Nation*, on one condition, namely, that in reprinting your letter in the *Nation* of March 19, or in otherwise quoting article V of the constitution of the American Historical Association, you shall quote the whole of that article.

Very truly yours,

J. F. JAMESON.

*Dr. Dunbar Rowland,
Department of Archives and History,
Jackson, Mississippi.*

The answer to the foregoing letter follows:

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY,

JACKSON, MISS., June 2, 1914.

My dear Dr. Jameson:

I have pleasure in sending you a check for \$200.00, the contribution of the Louisiana Historical Society to the Calendar of French Archives relative to the history of the Mississippi Valley. This, I very much hope, will enable us to complete the undertaking, as further additions to our funds are very doubtful; and I should regret very much to report to the Conference that the Calendar was still unfinished. However, I am sanguine of a speedy completion.

In the matter of our correspondence relative to the publication of a reply to your argument concerning the government of the American Historical Association, let me say that I shall have pleasure in quoting fully certain sections of the constitution, and may publish it in full for the benefit of all concerned.

You doubtless noted that when I did not quote in full the omission was indicated.

It is my wish to discuss the government of the Association fairly and good naturedly, and I feel that this spirit prevails among us.

With best wishes, I am,

Very truly yours,

DUNBAR ROWLAND.

*Dr. J. F. Jameson,
Woodward Building,
Washington, D. C.*

It may be contended that the *American Historical Review* should not contain discussions of current controversial questions, even when they relate to the affairs of the Association. There is merit in that thought, but when such discussions do appear in advocacy of certain ideas held by the Managing Editor, then those opposing his views, in my humble opinion, should be given access to the same medium used by him. In the present case we have a member of the Council holding the position of Managing Editor which enables him to attack opinions held by other members of the Association, and then fall back behind the position that the pages of the *Review* could be filled in better ways, when asked to publish an answer. The same thought occurs to one in connection with his defense of the Council.

It will be noted that Dr. Jameson, in his letter of May 18, takes the position that the letters in the *Nation* were a sufficient discussion of the question at issue, and that no one wanted to read anything more about it. The last letter in the *Nation* appeared March 19, 1914. The question was discussed by Dr. Jameson in the April number of the *Review*. Why was the discussion continued if the members of the Association were tired of it?

The foregoing gives the reason, if one is necessary, for the publication of this pamphlet.

In order that the record, in all of its parts, may be presented to all members of the Association, the letters which appeared in the *Nation* of January 22, 29; February 5, 26, and March 19, 1914, are given in the order in which they appeared.

These letters follow:

IN THE NATION OF JANUARY 22, 1914, PAGE 82.

The American Historical Association.

To the Editor of The Nation:

SIR: In the *Nation* of January 8, there appeared an account of the Charleston meeting of the American Historical Association, in which a well-defined movement against certain existing methods was dismissed as a "discussion of the system of electing officers." This movement was an important feature of the business meeting.

I have awaited the appearance of the annual account of the meeting with some curiosity, as I rather expected that little would be said about the reasons which lie behind the well-taken objections to the present methods of electing the officers of the Association. As this is a vital question in a great and useful organization of students and scholars, I may venture to make some comments upon it.

Section 4 of the constitution of the American Historical Association as it appears in the last official report, is as follows:

The officers shall be a president, two vice-presidents, a secretary, a secretary of the Council, a curator, a treasurer, and an executive council consisting of the foregoing officers and six other members elected by the Association, with the ex-presidents of the Association. *These officers shall be elected by ballot at each regular annual meeting of the Association.*

The last sentence is plain and unmistakable. It is the organic law regulating the election of officers of the American Historical Association. It is not possible to have a legal election of officers in any other way than that laid down in the constitution.

I have been an active, an interested, and an attending member of the Association for about twelve years. I have attended, if my memory is accurate, ten annual meetings, and it has never been my good fortune to see the provisions of the constitution relating to the election of officers carried out in an annual business meeting. May I commend this astonishing fact to the many learned gentlemen of the Association who specialize in constitutional interpretation?

It may be interesting to know something about the methods in force in the Association for the election of officers. They are something like this: The council, at its annual meeting, very obligingly, and in order that the Association may not be distracted from its scholarly repose, selects a nominating committee to name the officers. This committee keeps its action a profound secret, for reasons of state, or perhaps because the council has not given out the list, until the business meeting. When the rank and file are assembled they are politely but firmly told who are to be the officers for the coming year. It may be called unparliamentary for one of the workers in the ranks from Mississippi to call such methods oligarchical, but the word certainly fits.

It does not appear by what authority the council presumes to appoint this nominating committee. The Association itself, the creator of the council, certainly has no authority to appoint such a committee, but it seems that the council has. That it has assumed such authority seems to be beyond question.

There have been many and long-continued murmurs beneath the surface against such methods, and they at last found expression at Charleston, much to the evident astonishment of some of the leaders, and to the manifest pleasure of the rank and file.

The American Historical Association is suffering from a dangerous disease. It cannot be cured by Homoeopathic treatment. It is a case for the knife. If I know anything of the sentiment of the modest, earnest, scholarly men who sustain the Association, they will not submit further to arbitrary and unconstitutional methods in the administration of the affairs of one of the greatest associations of scholars in the world.

I have no personal criticism to make of anyone. I do not wish to be understood as finding fault with the officers of the Association, past or present. I am not an office-seeker, for I well know that my action at Charleston prevents me from accepting an official position in the Association for years to come, if not for all time.

DUNBAR ROWLAND.

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY.
JACKSON, MISS., January 12.

IN THE NATION OF JANUARY 29, 1914, PAGE 107.

The American Historical Association.

To the Editor of The Nation:

SIR: I am very grateful to Dr. Rowland for his communication, published in the *Nation* on January 22, which states at length the most interesting feature of the recent business meeting of the American Historical Association—a feature to which I could allude only most briefly in my report of the meeting, owing to the cruel bonds of space limitation and not to any oligarchical attempt at *suppressio veri*. For I feel, in common I believe with every other member of the Association, including the officers, a keen appreciation of the courageous way in which Dr. Rowland stood up at Charleston to criticize the methods of the election of officers of the Association and to voice the opinion that the power of the Council “has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished.” It is well that the members of the Association should be aroused by him to the fact that they have been too indifferent.

It is quite natural that the steadily widening membership and the increasingly varied activities of the Association, together with the human experience that it is oftener easier to do a thing one's self than to get some one else to do it, should have inevitably led to an increase in the powers and activities of the Council. I do not conceive of the Council as a oligarchy grasping for power, but rather as a hard-working body having increased labors thrust upon it. The constitution of the Association says nothing about committees or their appointment. But as the work of the Association has grown with time, committees have had to be appointed. What was more natural than that they should have come to be appointed by the Council? So now we have reached the brink which Dr. Rowland had opportunely revealed. What is to be done?

If Dr. Rowland, or any one else, thinks that the general will of the members of the Association as to the choice of officers would be expressed satisfactorily and without criticism by simply following the letter of the clause in the constitution which he italicizes (“These officers shall be elected by ballot at each regular meeting

of the Association"), I fear his optimism is excessive. For two objections would be raised. Only a small proportion of the members are able to attend the annual meeting. Not a tithe of the 2,843 members went to Charleston. Would not the absent ones say in criticism that they also ought to have some rights? They might. But in an organization like the Historical Association, in which the chief opportunity for activity is in attendance at the Christmas meeting, a sufficient reply to such critics would be that they have a right to attend the annual meeting and there ballot for officers, and that if they do not take enough interest to do this, they should not criticize. This objection, therefore, is not, so it seems to me, of serious consideration. However, in the plan outlined below, absent members would have some influence in making nominations, even though they did not take part in the final ballot. There is another objection, however, which is vital and fundamental. As some one pointed out at Charleston—I think it was Professor Burr—it requires very little acquaintance with political assemblies, student organizations, and even college faculties to observe that a simple election by ballot is by no means likely to give general satisfaction. What usually happens in such cases is that a small group of men, more zealous or less scrupulous than the rest, come together beforehand, agree to support certain candidates, and spring upon the assembly an unseen slate which has enough organized support to carry the elections in a wholly unorganized mass of disconcerted electors. By a caucus of this sort a small and irresponsible minority may engineer elections by no means generally desired by the great majority.

To avoid the possibility of this and to afford an agency for ascertaining the real general wishes of the members of the Association, the Council has been in the habit of appointing a nominating committee, the council and the committee, as they stated at Charleston, have genuinely made some effort, in going to and fro in the earth, to consult members whom they happen to meet in regard to desirable nominations for the December meeting. The only difficulty is that many an individual may find, as does Dr. Rowland, that he himself did not happen to be one of those whom the committee happened to consult. Some years ago also the Council earnestly attempted to procure nominations by sending out to members, along with the bill for annual dues, a blank ballot for suggestions. But from some two thousand members they received less than two score replies. The experiment did not seem to be worth repetition.

In view of this situation I venture to repeat a suggestion which I heard favorably discussed on our homeward way from Charleston:

As it is essential that some canvass of opinions be made before the final balloting at the annual meeting, I suggest that the nominating committee, after learning as much as it can of the

sentiments of the members by conversation, shall draw up a list of several nominations for each office to be filled, leaving space for, and expressing the hope of receiving, additional nominations. Let this list be sent to each member some weeks before the annual meeting in order that he may mark his preferences among the suggested names or add nominations of his own. These marked nomination lists, returned to the committee, should be the basis for the final ballot to be voted upon at the annual meeting. This may be a little clumsy and involves some work, but it is similar to systems found fairly satisfactory by some colleges and universities for electing overseers, trustees, and alumni officers. It would not be likely to meet such apathy as did the efforts of the Council a few years ago, mentioned above; because a modest man who would hesitate to urge candidates whom no one has mentioned, is likely to be ready and eager to express a preference among names brought to his notice; and the provision for additional nominations would always give adequate opportunity to those who thought the nominating committee had not done its duty in bringing forward fairly representative names.

SIDNEY B. FAY.

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, January 24.

IN THE NATION OF FEBRUARY 5, 1914, PAGE 132.

The American Historical Association.

To the Editor of the Nation:

SIR: I have no love for controversy, but as I was chairman of the nominating committee of the American Historical Association in 1913, and am responsible to that extent for the nominations which were presented at the Charleston meeting last December, I owe it to my colleagues of the committee as well as to the Association, to make some reply to the criticisms of Mr. Dunbar Rowland in your issue of the 22d instant. I only regret that, in my unavoidable absence from the Charleston meeting, the unexpected duty of defending the action of the committee had to fall upon Prof. Clarence W. Alvord, who acted as chairman in my absence; but while I do not know what Professor Alvord said on that occasion, I have no reason to think that it was anything with which I should not heartily have agreed.

If Mr. Rowland's statement that the nominating committee "keeps its action a profound secret . . . until the business meeting" is only a rhetorical way of showing the intensity of his feelings, I have no quarrel with it; but it implies that the committee, either with or without the concurrence of the Council, sedulously hides its "slate" until the last moment in order that no iconoclastic champion of liberty may have a chance to break it, I can only say that such implication corresponds to nothing in the action of the committee of which I have any knowledge.

What the procedure of former committees may have been I do not know, but the procedure of the committee of 1913 I feel free to state. The committee comprised, besides myself, Professor Alvord, of the University of Illinois; Professor Bassett, of Smith; Professor Riley, of the University of Mississippi, and Dr. Krehbiel, of Leland Stanford. All the suggestions regarding nominations that were received by me were laid before each member of the committee; and such suggestions as were received by other members, and sent to me, were similarly transmitted. As a matter of fact, we received very few suggestions from any source. If there is, among the members of the Association, any widespread revolt against "arbitrary and unconstitutional methods," the nominating committee were not made aware of it. Even Mr. Rowland himself does not appear in the list of the committee's correspondents, although he had due notice of the appointment and personnel of the committee, and might at any time for the sum of two cents, have laid before the committee both criticisms and suggestions. We did not suppose at the time, and I do not think now, that the committee were expected to circularize the membership of the Association in the search for candidates, or devise some sort of primary through which candidates might be nursed.

Under these circumstances, the committee did what all such committees do; it went over the list of apparently available candidates, considered carefully the few suggestions made to it, and made up the best list of nominations that it could. The committee considered geographical or sectional arguments, as well as the scholarly standing of the man and his record of active interest in the Association. The several members of the committee widely distributed geographically, were all more or less intimately acquainted with members of the Association in their immediate locality or section; and we were further aided by a memorandum prepared by the committee of 1912, setting forth so far as that committee understood it, the prevailing opinions in the Association at that time regarding desirable nominations. I am not so vain as to imagine that the nominations finally agreed upon were ideal, or that several lists equally good might not conceivably have been made up; but I know that our decisions were made with a view to what we believed to be the best interest of the Association. To say, as Mr. Rowland does, that "when the rank and file are assembled they are politely but firmly told who are to be the officers for the coming year" is nonsense so far as the committee of 1913 are concerned.

Mr. Rowland characterizes the methods of nomination as "oligarchical." I have been for twenty years a member of the Association, serving for eight or nine years of that time as a member of the Public Archives Commission, and for three years as a member of the Council. I know of no oligarchy in the Association. I know only a group of men, all of them distinguished scholars, who have been willing to spend time and money in

building up the Association, and in organizing and advancing historical interest and historical scholarship throughout the United States.

On one point I hope that I may be allowed to reassure Mr. Rowland. At the close of his interesting letter he expresses the conviction that his action at Charleston will prevent him "from accepting an official position in the Association for years to come, if not for all time." This I feel sure is not the case. The Association fights its battles in the open, cherishes no grudges, and marks no man for banishment. If Mr. Rowland continues to render, as director of the Department of Archives and History in the State of Mississippi, the same distinguished services that he has rendered in the past, he may rest assured that the Association will be only too glad to honor him, and that he will be as free as ever to accept any office which the Association can bestow—provided, of course, that he is nominated and elected.

WILLIAM MacDONALD.

BROWN UNIVERSITY, January 31.

IN THE NATION OF FEBRUARY 5, 1914, PAGE 133.

To the Editor of The Nation:

SIR: Dr. Dunbar Rowland is, I know, incapable of intentional misrepresentation; yet I think that his letter respecting the American Historical Association, printed in your issue of January 22, is likely in two particulars to mislead your readers (in so far as they take any interest in the affairs of the American Historical Association); on the one hand, as to the methods which the Association now follows in respect to its elections to office, and on the other hand as to the amount of discontent with those methods that was evinced at Charleston.

The practice of the Association is not noticeably different from that of many other large bodies which hold annual meetings attended by but a small part of their membership. The committee on nominations was appointed a year ago by the Council, from among the members of the Association who were not members of the Council. Members were urged to write to these five gentlemen, respecting their preferences. It appears that the committee, in addition to the letters that they received, took considerable pains by conversation and some letter-writing to elicit the sentiments of others. The nominating committee then made up a slate against which no member, so far as I know, not even Dr. Rowland himself, had expressed the slightest objection. The reader would certainly infer from Dr. Rowland's communication that the list was dictated to this committee by the Council. On the contrary, no member of the Council had any knowledge of what the nominations would be. The nominating committee made its report in the usual manner of nominating committees. Any one who had other nominations to make could have made

them. The only trace of illegality that I could discern in the proceedings was that by vote of the Association (to which there was no dissenting voice) the acting secretary was instructed to cast a ballot for the list brought in by the committee. I think that such a vote is objectionable, and I have heard that it is illegal; but such societies usually follow such a practice, because if no other nominations have been made it saves time. At all events, I see nothing oligarchical about it. Perhaps it could be improved upon, but I am surprised to learn that neither the Association nor the Council has authority to appoint a nominating committee. Are all our seventeen committees, through which the Association does so great a variety of interesting work, illegal?

Secondly, one would not learn accurately from Dr. Rowland's communication just what happened at Charleston. He rose and made a vehement speech of protest, and believes that he had the warm approval of those whom he calls the rank and file. I can only say that, of all who spoke after him (and all were free to speak) none expressed dissatisfaction with the existing method of nominating officers, nor approved his suggestion that ballots should be sent out in the autumn to the 2,800-odd members—for this method had been tried three times and proved a failure. Neither does he record that, at the end of the discussion, it was voted that the new nominating committee should take the whole procedure of nominations into consideration, and report at the next meeting.

My own conviction is that, whatever theoretical qualms may have been felt by some, most members of the American Historical Association, as is the case in most similar bodies, perceive that the affairs of the Society will under any system be chiefly administered by those who are most interested. I think they regard the Council as distinctly accessible to new membership and to new ideas and on the whole approve nearly all that it has done. I think they should do so, for my observation has been that it is an unselfish and right-minded body, making its best endeavors to care for the interests of the whole membership.

J. FRANKLIN JAMESON.

CARNEGIE INSTITUTION OF WASHINGTON,
January 26.

IN THE NATION OF FEBRUARY 26, 1914, PAGE 207.

The American Historical Association.

To the Editor of The Nation:

SIR: I have read with interest the letter of Dr. Dunbar Rowland in your issue of January 22, in regard to the management of the American Historical Association, and the replies of Messrs. MacDonald and Jameson, appearing in the issue of February 5. Neither of these replies appears to me to face squarely the real charge, which is, to put it bluntly, that the American Historical

Association is run by a small clique or ring which controls the elections and divides the honors among the members and adherents of the group. This charge has been made with increasing frequency during the last few years. It has been made usually in a jesting way, nobody caring to appear to treat the matter too seriously, both at the meetings of the Association and wherever groups of historians have been casually thrown together. Furthermore, there appears to be very little difference of opinion as to who constitute the ring.

I did not support Mr. Rowland's movement at Charleston because I did not approve of the remedy he suggested, but I do believe that the facts which I am about to submit afford ground for a radical change of *policy* on the part of the Association. As I have served on the nominating committees of both the American Historical Association and the American Political Science Association, I hope I may be allowed to contrast the policies of the two organizations in the matter of elections to office. The tenure of such offices as secretary, treasurer, and the managing editors of the reviews published by the two associations should in the nature of things be more or less permanent, and in the following discussion we shall leave these offices out of consideration. The constitution of the American Historical Association provides for the annual election by ballot of seven officers and six members of the Council; and the Council composed of the officers and councillors so elected, together with the ex-presidents of the Association, chooses the board of six editors of the *American Historical Review*. Now, leaving out of account the two secretaries, the treasurer, the curator, and the managing editor of the *Review*, we have fourteen positions of honor, with little work attached, to be filled each year. Of the fourteen men at present holding these positions thirteen were in the office-holding group last year, and only one was taken from outside. At the recent meeting of the American Political Science Association I was chairman of the committee on nominations. Omitting, as was done in the case of the American Historical Association, the secretary and treasurer and the managing editor of the *American Political Science Review*, there are in the Political Science Association seventeen positions to be filled each year. Of the seventeen men recently chosen only six held office the preceding year, and eleven were taken from the general membership of the Association.

Why this difference in associations whose constitution and general purposes are similar? It is the fixed policy of the Political Science Association to encourage the younger men who have demonstrated their ability to do good work by sharing the honors of the Association with them, and enlisting their aid and counsel. What, on the other hand, appears to be the policy of the American Historical Association? Is it a purely selfish one of reserving the honors for a select group of older men, or is it to guard zealously the interests of the Association against the radical views of the

rising generation of historians, or yet, is it possible that the present group of office-holders believe that they enjoy a monopoly of the brains and talents of the Association? As long as the ex-presidents are members of the Council for life, not even the presence of two such doughty progressives as Col. Roosevelt and Professor Hart can rescue that body from hopeless conservatism. Surely, then, a little new blood should afford no ground for alarm.

JOHN H. LATINE.

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY, February 20.

IN THE NATION OF MARCH 19, 1914, PAGE 297.

The American Historical Association.

To the Editor of The Nation:

SIR: Since the publication of my letter concerning the management of the American Historical Association, which appeared January 22, three replies, or explanations, have been given to the public through the medium of the *Nation*. These letters were written by men of the highest standing in the Association: Professor Fay, of Dartmouth; Professor MacDonald, of Brown, and Professor Jameson, of the Carnegie Institution. These gentlemen are not only learned scholars, but they are also good judges of the strength of an assumed position. If my statement that the American Historical Association, under the leadership of its council, had been conducting and administering its affairs in an illegal and unconstitutional manner, could have been refuted, it would, of course, have been done. As a discreet silence has been maintained on the only point at issue it is fair to conclude that it is conceded that the "power of the council has increased, is increasing, and should be diminished." Professor Fay agrees with me entirely on that proposition.

While it could hardly be expected that Professor Jameson and Professor MacDonald would concede so much, it is reasonable to suppose that they are not prepared to justify the shutting out of the hundreds of men who attend the annual meetings of the Association from having any part in its government, other than that of ratifying what had been done by the Council. At any rate, they say nothing about the real point at issue.

Professor Jameson flies from the real issue and tries to conceal his flight by bringing non-essentials into the discussion. The question of the popularity or unpopularity of my position at Charleston does not affect in the slightest degree the justice of my contention. I stated there that if any men on earth were capable of self-government the members of the American Historical Association were capable; that we had allowed the Council to assume too much power, and that it was our duty to become self-governing. If the personal endorsement of at least one hundred men, including those who have held high positions in the Associa-

tion, was an indication that I was not standing alone, such an endorsement was certainly voluntarily extended after the business meeting. My learned and distinguished friend, I fear, does not read accurately the signs of the times, or he would not take the position that the methods of the Council are popular. If he thinks that the wiping out of constitutional guarantees is popular with the members of the Association he is blind.

Professor MacDonald makes a labored effort to defend the nominating committee. I have no quarrel with the committee. Some of my best friends served upon it. I conclude that they did what they were appointed to do. Such a committee has no legal existence, as the Council has no authority whatever to appoint it. How the committee performed its duties has no proper place in this discussion. There was no criticism of its members at Charleston, therefore Professor MacDonald's defence is unnecessary.

To put the whole matter concretely, my contention is that the duties of the Council are carefully laid down in section 5 of the constitution, as follows: ". . . the election of members, the calling of meetings, the selection of papers to be read, and the determination of what papers shall be published." It has no right to appoint a nominating committee which does nothing more than conduct a caucus by mail, the effect of which is to preclude a free and fair expression from the men who sustain the Association. The constitution contains the democratic idea. Is it not our duty to see that it is not set aside?

May I again emphasize the fact that my action in this entire matter is impersonal? I have repeatedly stated that it is the system, not men, that I am condemning. We have drifted, consciously or unconsciously, it matters not which, into the rule of the few in the American Historical Association. I do not claim to represent the entire membership in my contention for self-government. I do know that I have unmistakable evidence that there will be a revolution if the question is not handled justly and wisely by those in authority.

DUNBAR ROWLAND.

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY.
Jackson, Miss., March 15.

That the affairs of the American Historical Association have been conducted in an unconstitutional way by the controlling majority of the Council has never been denied, yet, strange to say, there is a contention that such methods have brought about good results and should be continued. Such an argument would condone the worst oriental despotism.

There are many ways in which this unconstitutional control of the Association has been brought about. These are some of them:

I.

By securing the selection of the officers of the Association by means of a nominating committee appointed by the Council.

II.

By withholding the nominations of the nominating committee from members of the Association until the business meeting.

III.

By having the officers elected at the annual meeting without a ballot, in violation of the plain mandate of the Constitution.

IV.

By the election of the Editors of the Review by the Council, an exercise of unauthorized power. (It may be well to note here that for many years the presidents of the Association have been taken from the editors of the Review.)

V.

By the selection of the places of meeting of the Association. The Council is empowered to call meetings, nothing more.

VI.

By the appointment of the chairmen of committees and continuing them in office for years.

VII.

By the appointment of all committees.

VIII.

By the creation and appointment of committees not authorized by the Association.

IX.

By placing its own members on the most conspicuous and important committees.

X.

By making the annual meeting of the Council in New York City an expensive social function.

XI.

By centralizing the executive duties of the Association in the Department of Historical Research of the Carnegie Institution of Washington.

XII.

By establishing an unwise and undemocratic succession in the offices of president and vice-president.

XIII.

By failing to have every act of the Council reported to and confirmed by the Association.

It is unnecessary to comment on the above specifications. It is only necessary to give the Constitution of the American Historical Association to show that not one of them is authorized by the organic law. This is proof of that statement.

CONSTITUTION.

(From the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1912.)

I.

The name of this society shall be The American Historical Association.

II.

Its object shall be the promotion of historical studies.

III.

Any person approved by the executive council may become a member by paying \$3.00, and after the first year may continue a member by paying an annual fee of \$3.00. On payment of \$50.00, any person may become a life member, exempt from the payment of fees. Persons not resident in the United States may be elected as honorary or corresponding members and be exempt from the payment of fees.

IV.

The officers shall be a president, two vice-presidents, a secretary, a secretary of the council, a curator, a treasurer, and an executive council consisting of the foregoing officers and six other members elected by the Association, with the ex-presidents of the Association. These officers shall be elected by ballot at each regular meeting of the Association.

V.

*The executive council shall have charge of the general interests of the Association, including the election of members, the calling of meetings, the selection of papers to be read, and the determination of what papers shall be published.**

*Italics by D. R.

VI.

This constitution may be amended at any annual meeting, notice of such amendment having been given at the previous annual meeting, or the proposed amendment having received the approval of the executive council.

This statement is respectfully submitted to the members of the American Historical Association with the single purpose of subserving the true interests of one of the greatest agencies for patriotic and unselfish effort in our country.

If the feeling becomes general,—and it is rapidly becoming so,—that a great body of scholars is dominated and controlled by a small group of men its usefulness is at an end.

We are much given to pointing with pride to the democracy of letters; as a matter of fact historians and scholars of all kinds are not different from other men; if they are allowed too great latitude in the management of associations such as ours they become too ambitious, unmindful of others, and forget the restraints which should be and always are thrown around the exercise of authority.

DUNBAR ROWLAND,

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY,
Jackson, Mississippi. December 1, 1914.





